

J.W. BENGOUGH

THE HUMOUROUS SIDE  
OF CANADIAN HISTORY

New York 1877

F5012

1877/78

2450

*The* EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



*Queen's University at Kingston*



*Purchased for the Lorne Pierce Collection  
at Queen's University on the  
Edith Chown Pierce Trust*





J. W. Bengough



## THE HUMOROUS SIDE OF CANADIAN HISTORY.

BY

J. W. BENGOUGH, *Editor Toronto Grip.* } *Read before the Canadian Club  
of New York.*



AN I convey to you, in the hour at my disposal, as much solid information as you may be in need of? Probably yea, because the lectures given in this course, under the auspices of the Canadian Club, have naturally pertained to that glorious country, Canada. But, so far as I am aware, no speaker has yet dealt systematically with the history of Canada.

Pending the arrival of Mr. Goldwin Smith, who is at present engaged umpiring for the foot-ball club at Cornell, I propose to devote my hour to the subject suggested, and in case Mr. Smith should feel offended by my intrusion into his special domain, I will endeavor to mollify him in advance by

making a pretty portrait of him right here. [A rapid sketch here set forth a picture at once recognized by the audience as—not Goldwin Smith—but Mr. Whitelaw Reid.]

Perhaps, before going on, I ought to apologize to the American portion of my audience for not having chosen a theme of greater novelty to them than the History of Canada. I had anticipated an audience made up chiefly of Canadians, but it is too late now to rectify the mistake. I am well aware that the citizens of the United States are just as familiar with Canada, her history and her affairs, as they are with Chinese Tartary, and I can hardly hope to tell them anything they do not know. But in view of the fact that Canada and the Republic have many features in common, besides baseball, and that many more or less distant relatives of American citizens are residing in that country, having in a few cases been struck somewhat suddenly by its charms as a place of residence, and having since exhibited a clinging affection for it, which few native Canadians can rival, it seems to me that all will be interested in the theme I have selected.

Canada is the name given to the greater portion of the continent of North America, and politically it is an integral portion of the British Empire. I mention this because there is an impression prevailing in Ohio and some other foreign countries, that Canada is owned by a railway syndicate. This is a mistake. Nominally Canada belongs to Great Britain, it contributes the adjective to the title, as Britain itself is only a small affair, but really and practically the vast Dominion is owned and run by the handsome and picturesque people so well represented in blanket suits on the present occasion. [Allud-



ing to the uniformed snowshoers ranged upon the platform.]

I may just remark here, *en passong*, as they say in Montreal, that the Canadian people when at home, invariably dress in the costume here shown, just as the people of New Jersey wear long-tailed coats and short breeches with straps to them, and bell-crowned beaver hats, with stars on their waistcoats and stripes on their pantaloons. It's the national costume you know, but they rarely venture out of the country with such good clothes on. When a Canadian makes up his mind to settle in New York, he invariably adopts the New York style of dress. He changes his clothes at the border, and then he goes in like a regular American, to Wall Street "born." Before long, so far as outward appearance goes, he would pass for a native New Yorker, and you could only tell he was a Canadian by contemplating the number of islands he owns and the magnitude of his ferry franchises. And this leads me to remark that when M. Bartholdi dressed that statue of his in Greek clothing, he availed himself of a poetic license. Canadians of the sterner sex *never* dress that way, never. To illustrate this point I will here make a rough sketch of the statue, as pictures of it are so rare in this city that its shape may have escaped your memory. Not only in the matter of costume, but also in the features, Bartholdi, with true French *naïveté*, endeavored to conceal the fact that in this great work of art he was paying a delicate compliment to a Canadian. He was afraid Mr. Wiman mightn't like it if made too literal. For I suppose it is pretty well known by this time that the statue is really meant for Wiman. The very fact that it stands there bossing an island is enough to suggest this, even if Bartholdi had never confessed his real

design. To be sure, mustache and mutton-chops do not look well in bronze, but they're all right on paper, and they're necessary in this case to expose Bartholdi's pleasant allegory. All that remains to be changed now is the legend, which is not



“Liberty Enlightening the World,” but “Wiman Defying New Jersey.”

This, however, is a digression from our historical subject. Canada was discovered by Jacques-Cartier, while engaged in a fishing cruise around the banks of New Foundland. From the banks to Canada would seem to be an unerring impulse of the



human mind. It is not true, however, that Cartier is French for *cashier*, and time has fully vindicated this gentleman's character, as the banks of New Foundland are to-day as sound as ever. The coincidence was startling, it must be confessed, and we can therefore excuse the newspapers of the day for hinting that there was something fishy about his sudden departure.

This event occurred some time after Christopher Columbus had got in his work. And Columbus, by the way, as an illustration of patience and perseverance is worthy even of the study of those good Democratic statesmen who are waiting for Cleveland to "turn the rascals out." I don't know what Columbus looked like, but I feel sure that upon his countenance was stamped a calm tranquil expression that no delays and discouragements could change. If so, he didn't look much like this. [Here a wild-looking sketch of Mr. C. A. Dana was given.]

Consider what Chris had to go through before he got started on that memorable voyage to India. It took him just twenty years to get started. Now, if it had been that he had to wait for Mrs. C... to get dressed, we wouldn't have wondered so much. But the trouble wasn't of that kind, it was purely financial. He couldn't sail without raising the wind, and mark his wonderful patience in raising it. Twenty years. The trouble was, nobody believed in his scheme as sound, and in the public interest. If it had been a surface-line franchise he was after, he might have convinced the Aldermen, but Christopher wasn't *Sharp*. It never occurred to him to get the ladies of the Congregation to go around with the book, though as a matter of fact he succeeded at last by the aid of a lady, Queen Isabella

of Castile, whose name is to this day a sweet smelling savor, embalmed in an immortal kind of soap, "Matchless for the complexion.—Yours truly, LILY LANGTRY."

Columbus went from court to court after the boodlee, it's a way boodlers have of going from court to court, if you notice—and at last he found a friend in Ferdinand. Ferdinand had a lot of the proceeds salted down, as was generally suspected, and he gave Columbus a check for the required amount, remarking, "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." Thus was patience rewarded. The voyage was a severe one, everybody was sick of it and mutinied. Columbus stood on the quarter deck with his guitar and sang to the moon about everything being at sixes and at sevens. A bird alighted on the topmast! Omen of success: Land must be nigh. With one rapid glance the piercing eye of Columbus seizes the happy portent. The fact that it was an *Eagle* proved that land must be near; while the shield of stars and bars upon its breast, the Canada codfish falling from its talons, the ninety-cent dollar hanging from its neck, and finally its piercing cry of *E Pluribus Unum* proved that that land could be no other than America, where all men are born free and equal, but don't stay so. America was discovered; no longer could it bashfully avoid the gaze of the other nations, and it doesn't.

Columbus' work made a boom in the discovery business, and that's how Cartier happened to be around in time to discover Canada. Cartier was a Frenchman, and he handed over the country to the king of France, as a matter of course. This one action is enough to show that Cartier had no connection with the Standard Oil Company; but his simplicity in giving

away the country when he might have kept it himself has modified Mr. Gould's opinion of his otherwise admirable character. This was the first time Canada was given away. The



offence was repeated, I've heard, at the time of the Washington treaty. Public opinion over there is opposed to this, as a regular thing, and at present there is a disposition to conserve the public interests, as it were. Perhaps I can convey the idea with a sketch.

When Mr. Cartier first landed in Canada there were Indians there. I do not wish to pose as a sensationalist, nor to rudely upset your settled convictions for the mere purpose of startling you, but I do allege that there were more Indians in Canada then than there are now. Several more. In fact, the majority of the present inhabitants are *white*, though President Cleveland seem to think our Government doesn't act that way.

The fact is the Indians are comparatively scarce now. They don't any longer pitch their tents in the main streets of Toronto, Montreal and Quebec. Most of them have been killed, though they still persist, the survivors, in playing Lacrosse. Had foot-ball, I mean the Yale and Andover variety, been known amongst them, the race would no doubt have been extinct. Then politics has no doubt helped to exterminate the Red Man. An Indian can eat most anything, but he must have pure air, and when the party caucus was established in Canada, the Indians had to go further back. You never find any Indians in the lobby at Ottawa. They couldn't stand it. I am informed that Indians take an active part in politics of Tammany Hall in this city, but that only shows that pure, mugwumpy politics isn't so fatal to them as the corrupt kind. At the same time I suspect that the Tammany politicians are not really Indians of a delicate type. In Cartier's time the population of Quebec was sixty, that is the pale-face population. As the uncivilized red men ruled on both sides of the St. Lawrence in those days, it is not likely that there were refugee defaulters. The Indian is pretty mean, but he isn't mean enough to have an extradition law that protects that sort of thief from justice.

These white men were honest French voyageurs, but

there are probably sixty of the other fellows in Quebec to day. Such is progress and civilization.

The manners of the early Indian tribes of Canada are very interesting. Their way of bringing up children, for example, was peculiar. The infant was strapped to a board and placed against a tree outside of the tent. This kept the youngster straight, which is more than the modern white method does : and besides it inured the child to the hardships of boarding out. I might also mention the Indian system of writing. In signing treaties, they used symbols for their names, thus the Great Chief Wise-Owl-Who-sees-in-the-Dark, would sign in this way. [Here a rough outline sketch of an owl was given].

Now such a signature wasn't much as a work of art, but it was worth more on a treaty generally than the white man's. In too many cases the words our Canadian poet *Mair* has put into the mouth of an Indian character were true :

“ Our sacred treaties are infringed and torn,  
Laughed out of sanctity, and spurned away,  
Used by the Long Knife's slave to light his fire  
Or turned to kites by thoughtless boys, whose wrists  
Anchor their fathers lies in front of Heaven !”

This Indian method of conveying ideas by means of pictures, is a great scheme, and is now in vogue in the highest journalistic circles. It forms the basis in fact, of the colossal and well-earned fortunes of Messrs. Keppler, Nast, Gillam, Oppen, De Grimm, Hamilton, Zimmerman, Taylor and many other smart young men well known to you all. Of course in their hands it is greatly improved. They color their symbols

more or less gaudily, and sell them for ten cents a copy. And they finish them up better than the Indian artist used to. For instance, in this case they would put on the modern improvements in this way, and call it, Wise-Man-Looking-Two ways-for-a-Presidential-Nomination. [An owl was here transformed into General B. F. Butler.]

The institution known as the lodge was universal among the aborigines, and one of their most striking characteristics was a fondness for display in the matter of dress. Nothing so tickled the untutored child of the forest as to be rigged in regalia, with feathers, sashes and ribbons, and the letters A. F. & A. M., or I. O. O. F., or other mysterious symbols be-spangling his bosom. In such a costume he thought nothing of fatigue, but would willingly travel on dusty roads all day in the hottest weather. When the savage denizens of Hochelaga (now Montreal) wanted to go on the war-path, they would just stick orange lilies in their hair and marched through that village on July 12th. That was all that was necessary.

The Indian women didn't have a vote, but the men folks let them carry everything by acclamation, especially tent poles and camp-fixtures, and they never endeavored to deceive them by subsequently chewing cloves. In vain Miss Anthony, who arrived a little before Cartier, advocated the female franchise and dress reform. No doubt the latter was needed, as you will see when I roughly sketch the costume then in vogue. To show that the absurdity was not confined to one sex, I will try to give you an idea also of the costume of the young bucks of the Iroquois tribe. [Here an amusing caricature of an Indian dude and dudene was given.]



The domestic arrangements of the Canadian Indians were, as we might reasonably anticipate, no better than those of other barbarian people. They were especially faulty, however, on the very important subject of marriage.

In the first place the courtship was peculiar. Sometimes the principal parties were not consulted at all. The young woman's mamma simply took a fish pole and went abroad to catch whatever she could in the shape of a man. No mere Indian, however handsome, had any chance while there were young lords and counts visiting at Cartier's house. The Indian girls were just crazy after blue blood, but sometimes they eloped with a low down Indian, because then the papers always described them as beautiful and accomplished. There is no mention in this early history of divorce proceedings, and so we are left in the dark as to how ladies, without talent even, became actresses in those days.

The Indians had two very noticeable vices, gambling and cruelty. As to the first it is alleged that in the excitement of the game (Stock Exchange or whatever they called it), players often staked their lives on the result, whence no doubt is derived the phrase: "You bet your sweet life." Their cruelty was proverbial, they were the original inventors of the spoils system, and after a victory they tortured and scalped their captives without any fine distinction as to offensive partisanship. I am glad to say this is no longer the practice in Canada. We now enjoy civil-service reform and the victorious party doesn't murder its enemies. It only removes them from office.

To return to Jacques-Cartier, he appears to have been a

man of great magnetism and chivalry, as he earned the popular title of the *Plumed Knight* amongst the simple and unsophisticated aborigines. Just here it might be interesting to introduce his portrait, which I have copied from historical documents discovered in Maine. Maine at that time belonged to Canada you know, and does yet by rights, some folks say. [Here a portrait of Jas. G. Blaine.]

Cartier was succeeded by a long train of other French gentlemen whose deeds I have not time to dwell upon. At length, the country passed into the hands of the British, after some preliminary ceremonies on the plains of Abraham, near Quebec. You are familiar, of course, with the incidents of that memorable battle, and especially with the last words of Wolfe, which are so often quoted. Somebody said to him: "They run." "Who run?" he asked. "The Republicans." "Then I die happy," he replied.

I think that was it, if I haven't got it mixed with the third-party vote in Pennsylvania in November.

The British flag was still waving over the land when I left. Attempts have been made on a couple of occasions to put a showier piece of bunting in its place, but without success. A certain Republic, which shall be nameless, had something to do with the attempts I refer to. If you had only told me of your intention I could have saved you a great deal of worry and expense by informing you that the Canadians cannot be conquered by force of arms. I don't blame you for trying though, for everybody who knows what Canadian girls are like would be anxious to conquer or perish just as you were. It is a tribute to American shrewdness, however, that you have

dropped the military plan, and resorted to this present scheme. I have no doubt your calculation is correct that as soon as the absent boodle aldermen and bank presidents form a majority of our population over there, they will cast a solid vote for annexation on condition of a general amnesty being granted. And I have only this to say, that as soon as a clear majority of our most wealthy citizens so decide, annexation will be all right. But I see that my time is up, and I must drop this interesting theme and bid you good night.







